

Palmetto Gulch Stamp Mill
Three-quarters of a mile east on Willow
Creek and one-quarter of a mile north
on Palmetto Gulch
South Pass City Vicinity
Fremont County
Wyoming

HABS No. WYO-42

HABS
WYO,
7-SOPAC,
15-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20005

PALMETTO GULCH STAMP MILL

HABS
WYO,
7-SOPAC,
15-

Location: Three-quarters of a mile east on Willow Creek and one-quarter of a mile north on Palmetto Gulch, South Pass City Vicinity, Fremont County, Wyoming.
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: (USGS South Pass City Quadrangle Map) 12.682960.4703760.

Present Owner: Wyoming Recreation Commission (The land upon which the stamp mill is located is owned by the U. S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management.)

Present Use: Preserved by the Wyoming Recreation Commission as an example of the type of stamp mills used in the early days of the South Pass gold rush.

Statement of Significance: The mill is the best preserved example of the type of stamp mill used in the South Pass region between 1870 and 1900.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The first gold mining technique used in the South Pass Area was "panning." The usual gold pan was from 10 inches to 18 inches in diameter and had a depth of two inches with the sides at a slope of approximately 35 degrees to the horizontal. It was usually made of iron, steel or copper. Gravel was put into the pan and then washed with water. The gold, which was heavier than the other material, would sink to the bottom. The remaining material was then dried and sorted. Rockers and sluices were then developed to facilitate gold mining. These were long wooden boxes into which gravel was shoveled and washed. The gravel, which first is sent through a hopper that strains out the larger rocks, was then washed over riffles on the bottom of the sluices. These riffles caught the gold as the water washed down over it removing the other material.

A third process was the stamp mill. This was the last process employed in the South Pass region during the nineteenth century and the Palmetto Gulch Stamp Mill is a good example. The stamp mill is driven by either steam or water power. Upright rods with 600-pound solid iron cylinders attached to the bottom were used to crush the gold bearing rock in the battery box. A stream of water passed through the box and formed a thick paste with the crushed ore rock. This paste was then forced through a fine wire mesh (which surrounds the battery) and into steam heated tubs. Next, mercury was mixed with the paste to attract the gold, after which other chemicals are added to dissolve materials other than the gold. Finally, the water

which flowed out of these pans passed through a trough where any remaining gold was separated.

PART II. SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

A. Old Views: Photographic file of the Bureau of Land Management, District Office; Lander, Wyoming.

B. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Shaffer, Thomas, planner for the Wyoming Recreation Commission; interview in Cheyenne, Wyoming on June 19, 1973.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Murphy, Robert. Miner's Delight, Investor's Despair: The Ups and Downs of a Sub-Marginal Mining Camp in Wyoming. Sheridan, Wyoming: Piney Creek Press, 1972.

Twain, Mark. Roughing It. New York: New America Library of World Literature, Inc., 1962.

Winters, Wayne. How and Where to Pan for Gold. Tombstone, Arizona: Tombstone Nugget Publishing Company, 1961.

Prepared by John Paige
Project Historian
National Park Service
Summer, 1973

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were made during the 1973 Wyoming Project undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the Wyoming Recreation Commission. During the project, records were made on twenty-eight (28) individual subjects and six (6) historic areas.

This project was under the general supervision of John Poppeliers, chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey. Project Supervisor was Professor J. William Rudd, Architect, of the University of Cincinnati. Project Historian was John Paige, Oklahoma State University. The measured drawings were prepared by John Uhler, University of California at Berkeley, Architect; and Student Assistant Architects Richard Duflocq, University of Cincinnati,

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Clayton Fraser, University of Tennessee, and Richard Wyatt, California Polytechnic University at San Luis Obispo. Jack E. Boucher, HABS staff photographer, provided the photographic record. This report was edited for HABS in 1977 by Candace Reed.

ADDENDUM TO:

PALMETTO GULCH STAMP MILL

.75 mile east on Willow Creek, .25 mile north on Palmetto Gulch
South Pass City
Freemont County
Wyoming

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